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FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5124
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 1405
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RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 3542

UNCLAS RIO DE JANEIRO 000334

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: Rio Radar - Weeks of September 25 and October 2, 2009

REF: RIO DE JANEIRO 329

¶1. (U) Rio Radar is a weekly compilation of key economic, political, commercial, and other developments in the states of Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Minas Gerais, Espirito Santo, and Sergipe. This week's subjects:

U.S. DRAWS THOUSANDS AT BRAZIL'S PREMIER BOOK FAIR

¶2. (U) The United States was the featured country at the bi-annual Rio Book Fair that took place September 10-20. The Bienal fair is the third largest public event in Rio, after New Year's Eve on Copacabana Beach and Carnaval, and arguably Brazil's most important literary/publishing event. More than 640,000 people visited the Bienal, including over 120,000 students who attended as part of official class trips. As part of its participation in the Bienal, the Consulate helped bring a dozen prominent American authors to take part in panel discussions, debates and book signing events. In addition, the Consulate constructed a stand where Consulate staff distributed information materials on the United States and organized a number of events for the visiting public. Among the highlights were mini-lessons in English with the local IBEU bi-national center, briefings by Consulate staff from Public Affairs, Foreign Commercial Service and the Library of Congress, presentations by former Youth Ambassadors and staff from Fulbright/Education USA about exchanges and US studies opportunities, quiz shows with prizes, and evening musical performances by a Brazilian jazz musician. An estimated 70,000 people visited the U.S. stand during the 11-day event.

BAHIA: NEXT BIG PRE-SALT FIND?

¶3. (U) President of Petrobras Jose Sergio Gabrielli confirmed on September 25 that the company is conducting studies on possible pre-salt oil reserves off the coast of Bahia state, in the Northeast and could soon begin exploration drilling. Bahia Governor Jaques Wagner said on September 23 the chances of finding pre-salt oil in the region are "very high." Geologists have in the past argued that oil deposits in the Santos Basin pre-salt reserves off the coasts of Rio de Janeiro, Espirito Santo, and Sao Paulo could extend along then entire Brazilian coast. Pedro Paulo Lobo, an economist in Petrobras' Business Development unit told us that the company did not have precise size estimates of any oil reserves in the area, but explained the reservoir could extend all the way to Rio Grande do Norte state, which would span the coastlines of an additional five states.

VIOLENCE GRIPS MAJOR FAVELA, POLICE CORRUPTION ALLEGED

¶4. (U) Since May, competing narco-trafficking gangs have been fighting for control for the Complexo da Mare, one of Rio de Janeiro's largest favelas. According to Global Justice, a prestigious human rights group, the Mare violence has resulted in more than fifty killings, forcing the closure of eight schools and five nurseries. Global Justice also reported allegations from Mare residents that military police officers from the 22nd Battalion supported one of the gangs during the occupation by renting out three armored personnel carriers (APCs) to gang members.

ARMED ASSAULTS ON RIO'S AFFLUENT APARTMENT BUILDINGS

¶5. (SBU) On September 21, armed assailants forced their way into a residential apartment in Zona Sul, Rio de Janeiro's most affluent

area, taking twenty three hostages and stealing high value goods, such as jewelry and electronics, from the apartments (Note: Many Consulate direct hires reside in Zona Sul neighborhoods. End Note). The incident marked the fourth time over the past month that armed robbers attacked apartments, involving hostages, in the Zona Sul area. Some security experts see a link between the uptick in residential attacks and the police force's increasing "pacification" of neighboring favelas, by forcing drug-trafficking gangs into other areas of operation and criminal activities (Reftel).

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